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Hoffman assumes command

By Capt. Glen Roberts
Public Affairs

More than 1,300 people were in attendance to watch a time-honored ceremony marking the change of command for the 52nd Fighter Wing here Wednesday against a backdrop of pristine wing aircraft and an oversized American flag.

Brig Gen. Donald Hoffman became the 20th commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing when Brig. Gen. Scott Van Cleef relinquished command during the 30-minute ceremony in Hangar 1.

"Today is a celebration," said 3rd Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Wehrle, who flew in from his home station at RAF Mildenhall, England, to preside over the ceremony.

"First, we celebrate the great accomplishments of the current command team, Scott and Barbara Van Cleef," Wehrle said moments after presenting Van Cleef the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star

medals. "They have taken a wing with a long and celebrated history to an even higher plateau.

"Today is a celebration for Brig. Gen. Don Hoffman as well, because he, like a lucky few, now has the chance to be a fighter wing commander," Wehrle said.

Wehrle also presented two Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards to the wing — one for the period of June 1997 to June 1999, and the other for actions in Operation Allied Force.

Reflecting on his tenure as commander, Van Cleef was quick to deflect the praise he received toward the men and women of the wing.

"While I'm very honored to receive the personal awards I got today, I'm most proud that we were able to award the wing two Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards today. You deserve the credit for this accomplishment, and it is you who made this happen. It is only fitting that as we make this transition in

leadership that YOU be properly recognized for what you've done," said Van Cleef, who is leaving to become the assistant deputy undersecretary of the Air Force for international affairs.

Hoffman comes to Spangdahlem from his NATO post as assistant chief of staff for Operations, Headquarters Allied Air Forces Northwestern Europe, located at RAF High Wycombe, England. Before that he was a special assistant to Supreme Allied Commander Europe Gen. Wesley Clark at SHAPE headquarters.

"I look forward to working with members of the 52nd Fighter Wing as we employ airpower to meet U.S. and NATO requirements," Hoffman said. "The mission is a tough one and the hours are long, but we are in one of the best locations the U.S. Air Force has to offer. I promise to work with you to continue the successes of the 52nd Fighter Wing and to make this the best

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Senior Airman Esperanza Berrios

Brig. Gen. Scott Van Cleef, right, hands the wing saber to Brig. Gen. Donald Hoffman during a change of command ceremony, while Airman 1st Class Steven Seibert, honor guard, looks on.

Power cleaning

Staff Sergeant James Swihart, a laboratory technician with the 52nd Dental Squadron, makes adjustments on acrylic dentures. National Dental Assistants Recognition Week begins Sunday and runs through March 11. The week recognizes the accomplishments of military and civilian dental assistants and laboratory technicians. The theme for the 23rd annual event is, "Together making a World of Difference."



Senior Airman Esperanza Berrios

Falcons tangle with Eagles at Lakenheath

Spangdahlem's 23rd Fighter Squadron F-16 pilots practice air combat tactics with F-15C counterparts in England

By Capt. Peter Kerr
48th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The North Sea hosted a strange sight last month, as dozens of Eagles and Falcons grappled for air supremacy. The 23rd Fighter Wing from Spangdahlem Air Base visited the 48th Fighter Wing Feb. 14 through 25 to practice dissimilar air combat tactics.

"This is some of the best air-to-air training we've had," said Capt. Philip Malebranche, pilot with the 23rd Fighter Squadron. "In Germany, we rarely get to fight dissimilar aircraft - we fly a lot against other Vipers (F-16s). Here we have fought against F-15Cs and Es, F-3 Tornados and Mirage 2000s from France."

The 23rd brought six F-16CJ aircraft, along with 14 pilots and 64 maintenance and other support members to RAF Lakenheath, to support training during day and night using night-vision goggles.

"The NVGs are quite eye-popping," said Malebranche. "We train with them in the suppression of enemy air defense roles, but using them in air-to-air is just amazing. In the darkest night, I can see fighters more than 50 miles away."

Malebranche compared the F-16CJ with the F-15Cs. "When we are fighting air-to-air, we are really in the Eagle's realm. The Viper is still one of the most maneuverable aircraft, and we have some advantages against the Eagle at lower altitudes, while they do better higher up."

"This is a treat to fight against U.S. F-16s," said Capt Richard Steele, 493rd Fighter Squadron. "In general, U.S. forces are better trained and have better tactics. I think the F-16 has a slight advantage closer in, while the F-15 was built for longer distances; beyond visual range attacks. We have better radars and more weapons - they can't see as far away, but



Capt. Peter Kerr

Lt. Col. Bob Sneath, assistant operations officer with the 493rd Fighter Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom, conducts a final briefing to 23rd Fighter Squadron and 493rd FS pilots before the units flew dissimilar air combat tactics training sorties.

they are harder to see because they are smaller."

Steele admitted a lot of ribbing goes on between Eagle and Viper drivers. "It's good to see these guys, and be around them - they are just like us, and it is good to be on the same team."

So who is winning the most air victories? "We have an advantage because we do this all the time," said Steele. "But they are holding their own."

Other benefits are also derived from the Falcons visiting RAF Lakenheath. "The flying has been good, and it has been interesting to see their tactics and how they employ air-to-air," said Steele. "But it is also good on a personal basis to see these guys - they were the voices on the other side (of the radio) when we went in to Serbia in Operation Allied Force. Now we get to sit down and swap stories, and see how things went from their perspective. If we do go to another conflict, these will be the guys we'll go in with. It is good to practice

with them - it helps make us one combat team."

RAF Lakenheath's support was also noted.

"The support we received from the logistics group, transportation, component repair squadron, equipment maintenance squadron - all the back shops - was outstanding," said Malebranche. "I can't stress it enough - they helped us out whenever we needed anything. It made this deployment painless for everybody."

"This is good training," said Lt. Col. Rick Reynolds, 23rd FS commander. "While air-to-air is our secondary mission, it is their (F-15s) primary - they are the experts - so we realize a big benefit from training with them. I hope one day the Eagles will get a chance to visit us at Spangdahlem, so we can all continue to benefit from air-to-air-training."

Hoffman

assignment of your career"

Hoffman, an Air Force Academy graduate with more than 3,000 flying hours in fighter, trainer and transport aircraft, is no stranger to Germany.

"My wife Jacki and I spent three years across the Mosel at Hahn Air Base and have experienced the

warm hospitality of our German hosts," he said. "Jacki, Daniel, Erika and I are delighted to be here."

He also acknowledged Gen. and Mrs. Van Cleef, who preceeded the Hoffman's at a previous assignment in Egypt in 1992.

"Gen. and Mrs. Van Cleef, we

wish you the best in your next assignment. We followed you once before and you left a great legacy, and I know the same will be true here at Spangdahlem," said Hoffman.

"I know in the course of things and with the constant turnover of the

wing that my memory will soon fade to an eight by 10 photo on the wall in the wing headquarters building," Van Cleef said in concluding his speech. "But know this - the fond memories that I have of Team Eifel and every one of you will live with me forever"

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Thanks, and farewell

By Brig. Gen. Scott Van Cleef
Outgoing 52nd Fighter Wing commander

It's amazing how fast the past 20 months have gone by. When I had the good fortune of becoming the commander of this wing in July 1998, I said during the change of command ceremony that there would be many challenges ahead, and that the possibility existed that we could be called upon to fly into the face of danger. America, I said then, expects no less from its warriors.

Nine months later, we did fly into danger, and this wing rose to meet that challenge. Not only did we accomplish all of our objectives, but we accomplished them with excellence.

Through deployments, inspections, exercises and combat, this team has time and again proven its ability to serve the Air Force and our country with great distinction.

As military members, we're all used to frequent moves and farewells. But I can tell you that I leave now with a sense of pride and sadness. I'm proud because of all the things you've accomplished and the obstacles you've overcome. The tremendous talents and perseverance displayed by every member of this wing amazes me even now.

The sadness comes from leaving an organization that has become part of my family. It's no secret that Barbara and I have enjoyed our time in the Eifel, and that's due not only to the men and women of this wing but also to the warm hospitality of our German hosts. I honestly believe that together, along with our active-duty, civilian, family and local community members, we make an incredible and unstoppable team. I'll miss being a part of it all.

To the men and women of Team Eifel, I'd like to thank you for your dedication, sacrifice, loyalty and professionalism that you've exhibited during my tenure as your commander. This has truly been the highlight of my military career. You all ought to be really proud of what you do and who you are.

I thank you for your loyalty and I ask that you express that same loyalty to



Senior Airman Esperanza Berrios

Brig. Gen. Scott Van Cleef gives a thumbs up to onlookers before his last flight Monday as commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing.

General Hoffman. You have many challenges in front of you, and I'm confident that under his leadership, you'll continue the tradition of excellence you've established.

You can be sure that wherever I am,

I'll be looking back and keeping an eye on how Team Eifel is doing.

Thanks again for the great support, and Barbara and I offer our best wishes to all of you.



National Dental Assistants Week

By Col. Stephen Porter
52nd Dental Squadron commander

National Dental Assistants Recognition Week begins Sunday and runs through March 11. The theme for this year's 23rd annual recognition week is "Together making a World of Difference."

The week is a tribute to the commitment and dedication our military and civilian dental assistants and laboratory technicians exhibit throughout the year. It's a time to acknowledge dental assistants for their unique and diverse contributions to the dental profession and the oral health care of the Eifel community.

Dental assistants and laboratory technicians are critical to the success of the 52nd Dental Squadron. Whether passing instruments and mixing materials chairside, taking and developing X-rays, or cleaning teeth and giving oral hygiene instructions to patients, dental assistants are involved in every aspect of the delivery of oral health care to Team Eifel members.

Dental assistants greet you upon arrival in the reception area, type and file your dental record, package and sterilize instruments and pour up your impressions in the dental lab.

Some assistants gain additional experience in the dental specialties. They might start your IV and monitor your vital signs during a conscious sedation oral surgery procedure, or they may bond your orthodontic brackets in place under the orthodontist's guidance.

The next time you visit the dental clinic, take a moment to recognize all that our dental assistants and dental lab technicians do every day to ensure you receive the safest, most modern and most comfortable oral health care in the world.



Musical history tour

From left, Senior Airman Lisa Wright, Senior Airman Asher Norwood, Staff Sergeant Dan Frith, Kim Summerlin and Staff Sergeant Richelle Wright, all members of the 752nd Munitions Support Squadron at Volk, the Netherlands, sing Gospel songs during a performance at the Volk Community Center Feb. 25. The show, entitled "Black Through Time," included songs from several famous African-American singers such as Billie Holiday, Natalie Cole and The Jackson Five. The event was sponsored by the Volk Cultural Awareness Committee in honor of Black History Month, with more than 200 community members coming out to enjoy the standing-room-only show.